

What is claimed is:

1 1. A method for providing multimedia presentations on demand in a near on  
2 demand environment, comprising:

3 a) providing beginning segments for pre-recording by subscribers where  
4 each beginning segment corresponds to ones of a plurality of multimedia  
5 presentations, each beginning segment having a duration at least as long as a  
6 predetermined time interval; and,

7 b) transmitting each one of said plurality of multimedia presentations  
8 concurrently on a plurality of channels with identical presentations transmitted on a  
9 different channel of said plurality of channels, and with a start time of each  
10 transmission having a periodic interval not exceeding said predetermined time  
11 interval.

1 2. The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of providing said  
2 subscribers with a menu of said plurality of multimedia presentations.

3 3. The method of claim 1, further comprising responding to a subscriber request  
4 for performance of a selected one of said plurality of multimedia presentations by  
5 providing said subscriber an authorization to commence playback of one of said  
beginning segments corresponding to said selected one of said plurality of  
multimedia presentations

1 4. The method of claim 3, wherein said authorization comprises at least one of  
2 an authorization to commence recording said selected one of said plurality of  
3 multimedia presentations for which broadcast has already begun, and to commence  
4 playback of said corresponding one of said beginning segments.

1 5. The method of claim 3, wherein said authorization comprises a descrambling  
2 code key for descrambling said selected one of said plurality of multimedia  
3 presentations and said corresponding one of said beginning segments.

6. The method of claim 3, wherein said authorization comprises an access code for accessing a channel over which said selected one of said plurality of multimedia presentations is transmitted.

7. The method of claim 4, further comprising; preventing playback of said recording of said selected one of said plurality of multimedia presentations upon completion of said presentation.

8. The method of claim 3, further comprising; generating a billing code responsive to said subscriber request for said selected one of plurality of multimedia presentations.

9. The method of claim 1, further comprising; recording each said beginning segment provided to said subscriber automatically, responsive to said subscriber's initial activation of a multimedia system.

10. The method of claim 1, further comprising; periodically replacing ones of said beginning segments with new beginning segments corresponding to further multimedia presentations.

11. A system for providing multimedia presentations on demand in a near on demand environment, comprising;  
a multimedia broadcasting unit including;  
means for providing a plurality of beginning segments, each one corresponding to ones of a plurality of multimedia presentations, and each said beginning segment having a duration at least as long as a predetermined interval;  
and,  
means for broadcasting said plurality of said multimedia presentations on a plurality of channels, with a periodic interval between start times of identical programming broadcast on different channels not exceeding said predetermined interval.

1 12. The system of claim 11, wherein said broadcasting unit transmits to a  
2 subscriber a menu of said plurality of multimedia presentations to permit subscriber  
3 selection of one of said multimedia presentations.

1 13. The system of claim 11, further comprising an authorization control system  
2 responsive to a subscriber request for performance of a selected one of said  
3 multimedia presentations, said authorization control system providing said  
4 subscriber an authorization to commence playback of said multimedia presentation.

1 14. The system of claim 13, wherein said authorization comprises at least one of  
2 an authorization to commence recording said selected one of said multimedia  
3 presentations for which broadcast has already begun, and to commence playback of  
4 a corresponding one of said beginning segments.

1 15. The system of claim 13, wherein said authorization comprises a descrambling  
2 code key for descrambling a beginning segment corresponding to said selected one  
3 of said multimedia presentations for which a broadcast is in progress.

1 16. The system of claim 13, wherein said authorization comprises an access code  
2 for accessing a channel over which said selected one of said multimedia  
3 presentations is broadcast.

1 17. The system of claim 11, further comprising a performance control system for  
2 preventing subscriber playback of said recording of said selected one of said  
3 multimedia presentations upon presentation completion.

1 18. The system of claim 11, further comprising a billing control system generating  
2 a billing code responsive to a subscriber request for said selected one of multimedia  
3 presentations.